

## AFFIDAVIT

I, Daniel D. Wehrmeyer, Special Agent (SA) of the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), United States Department of Justice, being duly sworn, do depose and state that:

## INTRODUCTION

1. I am an officer or employee of the United States Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) within meaning of Title 18, United States Code, Section 2510(7), and am empowered by law to conduct investigations and to make arrests for offenses enumerated in Title 18, United States Code, Section 2516. At all times mentioned herein, I have been acting in an official capacity as a Special Agent with the DEA.

2. This Affidavit is offered in support of a criminal complaint and warrant for the arrest of **WILLIE R. BENTON, JR.** (also referred simply to as **WILLIE R. BENTON**), and **ARMANDO V. MERIDA** (aka **ARMANDO VELASCO** and **ARMANDO MERIDA VELASCO**) alleging that on June 26, 2018, they did commit violations of: Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1) and 841(b)(1)(A), that is, possession with intent to distribute cocaine, a Schedule II controlled substance; and Title 21, United States Code, Section 846,

that is conspiracy to possess with the intent to distribute cocaine, a Schedule II controlled substance.

### **TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE**

3. I have been employed by the DEA for approximately 21 years and have been assigned to the Cleveland District Office since February 1997. I have been assigned responsibilities to investigate federal crimes involving Money Laundering and Drugs. I have conducted investigations into the unlawful importation, possession with intent to distribute, distribution of controlled substances, the money laundering of monetary instruments, monetary transactions in property derived from specified unlawful activities and the associated conspiracies, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Sections 841(a)(1), 843(b), 846, 952(a) and 963, and Title 18, United States Code, Sections 371 and 1956.

4. I have received specialized instruction about narcotics, narcotics trafficking, money laundering and various techniques for investigating persons and organizations engaged in this unlawful conduct. During the past 21 years, I have participated in investigations involving the organized distribution of illegal drugs and has made numerous arrests for drug-related offenses. My experience as a DEA Agent includes, but is not limited to: physical surveillance, analyzing pen

register and telephone toll data, interviewing witnesses, drafting and executing search warrants seeking seizure of illegal drugs and other evidence of drug violations, supervising the purchases of controlled substances by undercover agents and informants, and debriefing persons arrested and convicted of drug trafficking offenses about their illegal activity.

5. I know that those involved in the illicit distribution of controlled substances nearly always attempt to conceal their identities, the locations at which the illicit transactions occur, and the flow of proceeds from the illicit activity into “clean” currency.

6. Through investigation and training, I have become familiar with the types and amounts of prices charged and profits made by drug dealers, as well as the methods, language, and terms which are used to disguise their illegal activity. I have been qualified in federal court to provide expert “opinion” testimony about drug trafficking practices.

### SUBJECTS

7. This Affidavit is regarding **WILLIE R. BENTON, JR.**, with a birth date in 1982, SSN XXX-XX-8926, and FBI No. 2958\*\*\*\*. **BENTON** is a black male who resides at 802 Orlando Avenue, Akron, Ohio. **BENTON** is 6’0”, 285 pounds, with black hair and brown eyes; **ARMANDO V. MERIDA** (aka



**ARMANDO VELASCO** and **ARMANDO MERIDA VELASCO**) with a birth date in 1976, No SSN, Alien Registration No. \*\*\*\*\*1023 and FBI No. 7885\*\*\*\*\*.

**MERIDA** is a Hispanic male who resides at 2032 Pressler Road, Akron, Ohio.

**MERIDA** is 5'6", 164 pounds, with black hair and brown eyes.

**FACTS AND CIRCUMSTANCES REGARDING PROBABLE CAUSE**

8. Except where otherwise noted, the information set forth in this Affidavit has been provided to me directly or indirectly by Special Agents of the DEA, Akron Police Department, Summit County Drug Unit or other law enforcement officers. Unless otherwise noted, wherever in this affidavit I asserted that a statement was made, the information was provided by another law enforcement officer (who may have either direct or hearsay knowledge of the statement) to whom I have spoken or whose report I have read and reviewed. Such statements are among many statements made by others, and are stated in substance unless otherwise indicated.

9. In the late morning on June 26, 2018, law enforcement received information from a confidential source which has been found to be truthful and reliable based on investigation confirming the provided information in this investigation. The confidential source provided that **ARMANDO V. MERIDA**

was going to deliver a large quantity of cocaine to **WILLIE R. BENTON, JR** at 696 Carlisle Street, Akron, Ohio,

10. On June 26, 2018, at approximately 4:30 p.m., investigators from the Akron-Summit County HIDTA Initiative conducted surveillance on **BENTON** as he departed his restaurant “What’s on the Menu” located at 271 S. Main Street, Akron, Ohio. Investigators followed **BENTON** to 696 Carlisle Street, Akron, Ohio, and established stationary surveillance in the area.<sup>1</sup>

11. At approximately 6:09 p.m., investigators observed, via the pole camera, a vehicle arrive at 696 Carlisle Street where **MERIDA** exited the passenger side of the vehicle carrying a box and entered into the residence with **BENTON**. At approximately 6:12 p.m., and via the pole camera, **MERIDA** departed 696 Carlisle Street, Akron, Ohio, and initiated mobile surveillance. At approximately 6:23 p.m., Detectives from the Akron Police Department conducted an investigative traffic stop on **MERIDA** as he traveled east on State Route 224 and Kelly Avenue. Detectives located a large amount of U.S. currency located in a black string bag on the floor behind the driver’s seat.

---

<sup>1</sup> On April 11, 2018, a pole camera was installed overlooking 696 Carlisle Street which currently remains operational. In addition, investigators surmised **BENTON** utilized 696 Carlisle Street as a “stash house” for his drugs and/or drug related proceeds.

12. During this same time, **BENTON** departed the residence at 696 Carlysle Street, Akron, Ohio, and sat in his vehicle in the driveway preparing to depart. Officer's approached the residence and a City of Akron search warrant was executed at 696 Carlysle Street, Akron, Ohio. Upon entry into the residence officers conducted a protective sweep of the residence for any individuals and was found to be unoccupied. Upon searching the residence, investigators located four kilograms of cocaine in the kitchen cabinet along with the box **MERIDA** carried into the residence.<sup>2</sup> Additional items seized from the residence included: a handgun, and three additional kilograms of suspected cocaine secreted in a safe. Both **BENTON** and **MERIDA** were arrested pending charges.

### **CONCLUSION**

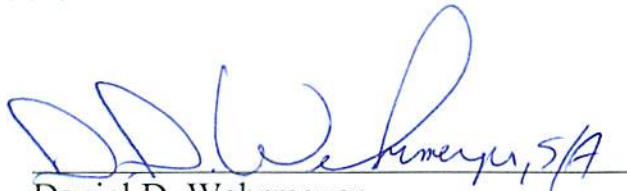
13. Based upon the above facts and circumstances, there is probable cause to believe that on June 26, 2018, in the Northern District of Ohio, Eastern Division, **WILLIE R. BENTON, JR.** and **ARMANDO V. MERIDA**, aka **ARMANDO VELASCO** and **ARMANDO MERIDA VELASCO**, possessed with the intent to distribute approximately seven kilograms of cocaine, a Schedule II controlled substance, in violation of Title 21, United States Code, Section 841(a)(1) and

---

<sup>2</sup> On June 27, 2018, TFO Gilbride conducted a presumptive field test which showed a positive reaction to the presence of a controlled substance.



(b)(1)(A) and conspired to possess with the intent to distribute approximately seven kilograms of cocaine, a Schedule II controlled substance, in violation of Sections 846 and 841(a)(1) and (b)(1)(A).

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "D.D. Wehrmeyer, S/A", written over a horizontal line.

Daniel D. Wehrmeyer  
Special Agent  
Drug Enforcement Administration

Subscribed and sworn to before me on this 27<sup>th</sup> day of June, 2018.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kathleen B. Burke", written over a horizontal line.

Kathleen B. Burke  
United States Magistrate Judge